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Observations and suggestions by Member States and international organizations on ways and means of furthering the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 25 of its resolution 51/138 B of 13 December 1996, the General Assembly invited Member States and relevant international organizations to submit to the Secretary-General by 15 March 1997 their observations and suggestions on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, and requested him to submit a report thereon to the Committee on Information at its nineteenth session.

2. Pursuant to that request, by a note dated 17 January 1997, the Secretary-General invited Member States and relevant international organizations to submit the replies referred to in resolution 51/138 B.

3. The following responses have been received as at 10 April 1997.

II. Replies received from Governments

Burkina Faso

1. The spectacular changes in the world in recent years have not eliminated the imbalances and inequalities which persist in the field of information and communication. In many developing countries, including Burkina Faso, the communication systems are modelled on those of the former colonial Powers. Since independence, however, these countries have forged ties based on aid or technical assistance for the development of their communication services.

2. It should be stressed that the development of communication infrastructures and capacities in developing countries is a *sine qua non* of the process of economic and social modernization. Communication plays a vital role in disseminating innovations in the fields of, *inter alia*, agriculture, health and education, participation in political life and social cohesion. More generally, the media play a pivotal role in nation-building. It is therefore necessary to

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find the means to develop communication infrastructures in the countries of the South.

1. At the national level

3. As communication is a key element in the development process, it must be incorporated in national development policies. These policies should take into account construction, equipment and the procurement of spare parts for the maintenance of communication infrastructures. Special attention should be focused on specific ways and means of using these infrastructures with a view to achieving social and economic change. The policies should also include on-site training sessions and training in developed countries, and the organization of conferences for users.

2. At the regional level

4. Regional cooperation has proved to be one of the essential means of capacity-building in the field of communication at the national, regional, and even global level. It is a means of attaining the collective goal of remedying disparities in the current world information and communication order.

5. To that end, regional communication agencies must be revitalized and their role must be redefined. They must cooperate and collaborate more closely among themselves in order to provide member countries with effective operational and technical strategies.

6. It might be useful to organize regional dialogues to consider the implications of new developments in the field of information and communication.

3. At the global level

7. The long-term objective of national and regional communications agencies should be to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries completely, in order to establish a world information and communication order. To that end, a survey should be taken of existing communication equipment and technologies with a view to the transfer of technologies.

8. Acquisition of the necessary know-how for the use of modern technologies and extensive cooperation for the exchange of experience are also of paramount importance.

9. Assistance in the form of programmes would be welcome. Such assistance would include the co-production, promotion and distribution of films, books, and radio and television programmes. It would not only be an incentive to raise production standards in developing countries, but would also contribute to publicizing the productions of the countries of the South. The final goal of such assistance would be the increased capacity of the countries of the South to contribute actively to international information and communication flows.

10. The efficient implementation of these measures requires strict coordination, for which the expertise of the United Nations can and should be utilized.

Sweden

The following document, entitled *Freedom of Expression*, contains the guidelines used by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) in media development cooperation to promote civil rights, media pluralism, political participation and diversity of cultural expression.

1. General

(a) Specification

1. SIDA media development cooperation consists of contributions to radio, print media, television and news bureaux, as well as support to auxiliary functions relating to those media.

2. Supporting media of communication serves the comprehensive goal of promoting freedom of expression and thus forms a part of SIDA's policy to promote democracy and human rights. Media development cooperation aims to support the development of civil rights and political participation in the recipient country (the rights of the first generation) and to facilitate diversity of cultural expression.

(b) Background

3. During the period 1977-1982, SIDA gave assistance in the communication sector. Ninety-five per cent of the assistance was directed to telecommunications and 5 per cent to the media. The latter supported the training of journalists, radio producers, broadcasting technicians and the rural press. The assistance was channelled primarily to SIDA programme countries in Africa.

4. Later in the 1980s and in the years since, the focus of support has broadened to include projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. The record to date shows difficulties with media development cooperation deriving primarily from

various external constraints imposed on the media sector. In situations of oppression, SIDA assistance has sought to make it harder for Governments to hinder freedom of expression.

6. Where greater freedom prevails, development cooperation has sought to promote and vitalize democratic processes. The assistance extended has been relatively limited. Professional training has been the prime focus. Tendencies towards greater media freedom are apparent today. Greater freedom will give greater leeway to assistance measures. Some difficulties remain, however. For example, the Governments in many recipient countries keep a controlling and limiting hand on the media sector; assistance extended to individual media risks establishing financial dependency; and so forth.

2. The media sector

(a) Media worldwide

7. Differences in socio-economic development prevail in the realm of the media, media technology, media ownership and the use of media for communication and information. On the one hand, information and the media are considered so vital to our industrial societies that we sometimes describe them as "information societies". On the other hand, millions of people in developing countries have no word for radio, television, satellite or rotary press in their mother tongues.

8. Be that as it may, media — and broadcast media in particular — are potentially present everywhere. Transistor radios have, for example, come to villages around the world much earlier than either electricity, reliable drinking water, measles vaccine or a school.

(b) Media in developing countries

9. The gap between wealthy industrialized countries and poor developing countries, together with the concentration of technological development in the former, has paved the way for the penetration of developing countries by media operating out of industrialized countries.

10. Given this development, voices were raised in the 1970s calling for a new world information order, in order — above all — to break the global news oligopoly that a handful of news bureaux based in Europe and the United States of America (most of them Anglophone) had acquired. One consequence of the prevailing concentration of influence is that European and North American perspectives dominate the media news in developing countries.

11. The media sector in many countries is unevenly developed in terms of geographical reach, target groups, quality and diversity.

12. The Government and organizations close to the Government (the ruling party/parties, state-controlled trade unions, etc.) predominate among owners of the broadcast media and exert considerable influence over broadcasting in many countries and, particularly in Africa and Asia, also have control of the press.

13. The sector is often disadvantaged by a general lack of legislation and/or contractual agreements that safeguard the sector's independence and define various actors' rights, tasks and integrity.

14. Where freedom of the press has been formally instituted, the practical exercise of the freedoms that exist may nonetheless be hindered by such factors as general poverty, a lack of professional competence, lack of branch cohesion and a heritage of government dominance over the media. Self-censorship on the part of editors and journalists/producers, too, may seriously limit, and sometimes set aside, the professional integrity of individual media and the "watchdog" functions of journalists vis-à-vis holders of power.

15. In addition to economic factors — the high costs of production and distribution, weak revenue purchasing power among the general public — other factors, such as the political attitudes expressed in legislation on freedom of the press, freedom of expression and so on set the bounds for what the media can do. Widespread illiteracy and linguistic diversity are other potent factors affecting the value and meaning of media to individual citizens and to society as a whole.

16. In Africa and Asia, a colonial heritage of centralized and state-owned media, particularly in broadcasting, lives on. In Africa, with the exception of a very few countries that have traditions of news gathering and reporting independent of the Government, there are relatively few independent print media. These, like most state-owned organs, are generally based in the capital and are owned by religious groups, women's groups, human rights organizations and unions. Few print media are published for economic gain.

17. Multinational companies control some media in some countries.

18. In a few countries newspaper publishers' associations coordinate collective purchasing, printing and distribution. In the current democratization process independent media have increased in number and importance in several African countries. There are signs, albeit weak ones, of emerging alternatives to state ownership and control in broadcasting, as well.

19. In South Africa, the oppressive institutions once created to enforce apartheid have made conditions particularly difficult for the media and journalists.

20. Among Asian countries, India, Sri Lanka and other countries of Southern Asia have traditions of an independent press, whereas state ownership and influence is dominant in South-East Asia. The State is the sole actor on the broadcasting scene in most Asian countries.

21. In Latin America, media ownership is more widely distributed among religious groups, public institutions, non-governmental organizations and commercial enterprises. Private non-governmental ownership and independent journalism have longer traditions in Latin America than in most other parts of the Third World.

22. More and more countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America are involved in the democratization process. Demands for democratic government and respect for human rights are voiced with varying emphasis and varying success all over the developing world.

3. Media development cooperation: objectives

23. Under the comprehensive goal of defending freedom of expression, SIDA media development cooperation aims:

(a) To stimulate the growth and vitality of media sectors that are characterized by pluralism, professionalism and integrity and reach a large share of the general public, serving citizens' right to all-round information and the free exchange of ideas and opinions; such a media sector works for and is strengthened by:

(i) Freedom from dependence on a single power base, or a few powerful interests, in society;

(ii) Organizations that further the needs and interests of the media, professional and other groups in the sector, and serve the sector's training and education needs;

(iii) The broadest possible pluralism of political opinion;

(iv) A broad spectrum of media that can reach the greatest possible share of the population (popular participation and media reach).

Furthermore, the media sector is strengthened by:

(i) Laws and agreements that codify freedom of the press and the rights and tasks of media vis-à-vis the Government, society and citizens;

(ii) An independent system of justice that can secure the observance of pertinent laws and statutes.

Such an independent, professional and pluralistic media sector constitutes a vital democratic resource through the contribution it makes to the development of a free exchange of ideas and all-round information. Such flows of communication and information, together with the individual citizen's right to information, are essential to the ability of citizens to make well-founded decisions and free choices on issues of importance to their lives and to society as a whole;

(b) Furthermore, SIDA's media development cooperation seeks to promote the growth and vitality of individual media, in particular radio, press and news services, which are characterized by experience, quality, diversity and integrity.

24. Media that serve many different functions can contribute to democratic, economic and social progress, judged from the point of view of both individuals and households and of society at large.

25. SIDA's media development cooperation also aims to encourage the emergence of media and media components in projects and programmes in other sectors of society, such as health and medical care, education, human rights, environmental protection, etc.

4. Strategy for media development cooperation

26. Measures in support of the media in countries receiving Swedish development assistance should be focused on four areas: (a) survey of the media sector; (b) development of the media sector as a whole; (c) assistance to individual media; and (d) development cooperation for professional training.

(a) Survey

27. Effective measures in support of the media, the media sector and professional training will vary according to the specific conditions that prevail in each country or region. The drafting of projects and programmes should therefore follow a survey of the media sector in the country or region in question, which will also benefit follow-up and evaluation of the projects.

(b) Development of the media sector as a whole

28. The prime purposes of support to the development of media organizations are:

(a) Assistance and strengthening of the professionals working in the sector and bolstering their integrity. One means towards this objective is the strengthening of professional organizations of journalists, photographers, radio and television producers and other vital groups in order to assist their professional development and promote their interests. Such measures might include direct assistance to federations of journalists, producers, editors and publishers and station managers;

(b) Strengthening the status, integrity and responsibility of the media with respect to freedom of the press, freedom of expression and freedom of information is another objective. Thus, SIDA may support organizations that cast light on, investigate and do scientific research about infringements of those freedoms. SIDA may also provide assistance to legal aid funds, to organizations within the sector for the maintenance of high ethical standards and to funds and advisory organs for assistance to individual media;

(c) The enhancement of the efficiency of media through sector-wide assistance to production and distribution is yet another objective and may include assistance to joint distribution schemes for collective purchasing of newspapers, as well as audience and readership research. SIDA may also support the development of regional cooperation and coordination in the media sector.

(c) Assistance to individual media

29. SIDA should focus primarily on radio, print media and news bureaux. SIDA should assist individual media, but with caution, so as to avoid distortions of competitive relations or aid dependency. Caution should also be observed in connection with support to private media enterprises for acquisitions in other countries.

30. Considering that media operations are not always profitable, the receiver and the donor should have agreed from the outset as to the necessity of financial planning with a view to the eventual phasing out of external development cooperation.

31. SIDA's development cooperation should be administered primarily in the form of training that is integrated with material production assistance and reader/audience surveys. It may support news gathering, the expression of opinion, cultural expression, education, advice and information, as well as audience/readership research.

32. SIDA may also support activities in specified areas, such as production of environmental news, programmes on human rights issues, and so forth, and give assistance to media output for special target groups within the general audience, such as radio and television programmes, newspapers, supplements/columns for children and youth, for women, ethnic minorities and so on.

(i) Radio

33. SIDA should give priority to broadcast media, especially radio, in order to give broad sectors of the population access to the media. Radio is relatively cheap with respect to both production, distribution and reception/use, while television still has a rather limited reach in most developing countries. Television is also a comparatively costly medium.

(ii) Print media and news services

34. In order to contribute to greater pluralism in the media sector, SIDA should support print media. Print media also merit development cooperation in that they contribute to the literate environment.

35. National and regional news services that work for greater measures of independence in journalistic coverage also merit development cooperation.

36. In order to contribute to greater pluralism, as well as broader reach on the part of the media, SIDA should support media that offer widespread access (often radio stations), strive to provide all-round information, a free exchange of ideas and a representative selection of opinions in their copy/programme output (including state-owned media where the owner has relinquished all control over editorial policy and operations).

37. In order to compensate for geographical concentration of media output, SIDA should support media that are well-rooted in the local community (e.g. branch editorial offices) and not least the local radio.

5. Development cooperation for professional training

38. SIDA should primarily support:

(a) Primary and continuous training of journalists, photographers, radio/television producers, etc. Training programmes can focus on:

(i) Production skills, such as news values, feature writing/producing, studio management, music and drama production, local news coverage, indigenous language production;

(ii) Specialized knowledge, such as the environment and natural resources, health and medical care, business economics, democratic processes;

(iii) More overriding professional skills, such as journalism ethics, journalistic integrity and human rights, modes of interaction between the media, the Government and the citizens;

(b) Continuous training of other media staff, focusing on skills in the area of studio engineering, production leadership/planning, desk management, archives and library services, distribution, advertising sales and account management, readership/audience/market studies.

39. The training, in the form of courses, seminars, workshops and so on should be offered primarily in the country or region in question. This does not exclude the possibility of supporting training activities that are offered in Sweden or a third country.[1]

40. SIDA may also support media training and auxiliary activities in conjunction with general elections and referendums.

Togo

1. The international environment, since the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the democratization of institutions with a view to establishing a pluralistic and multiparty system in our countries, has been reflected in liberalization. In the field of communication, this has taken the form of a redefinition of the statute and role of the state-owned media and the burgeoning of privately owned media.

2. Togo, for its part, has voiced its clear preference for liberalization and a more independent media environment, in both radio and television and the print media. This has resulted in the establishment of many newspapers, private radio and television stations, and a High Authority for Audiovisual Materials and Communication.

3. In this context, to further the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries is, in line with the views and the policy of the Government of Togo, to facilitate the integration of these countries in the new international media environment, through three strategies:

— assistance in redefining the role of the public media;

— assistance in rehabilitating the media and in acquiring new communication technologies;

— human resources training.

1. Redefinition of the role and function of the public media

4. The state-owned media have thus far been confined to a role which, today, has become controversial. They must now be turned into development tools for a new pluralistic democratic society and they must be allowed to be self-

[1] In the case of training in Sweden or the Nordic countries, the possibility of arranging elements of the course with the participation of Swedish/Nordic colleagues should not be neglected. Both as an aid to practical and theoretical aspects of the training, but also in order to establish liaisons between the Swedish/Nordic resource base and trainees so as to facilitate future cooperation.

financing and income-generating in order to cover the cost of their operation and equipment.

5. Thus, a multilateral institution such as the United Nations should provide assistance to developing countries for studies on the changes needed in the public media in order to enable them to adapt to this new context and on reformulating ways and means of integrating them into the socio-economic and cultural development process.

6. Donor assistance, in terms of both human and financial resources, is essential in order to meet the need for studies, audits and reports with a view to transforming the public media into financially and administratively autonomous enterprises, establishments or departments.

2. Assistance in equipping the media and acquiring new communication technologies

7. Most of the media in developing countries, whether public or private, are operating today with dilapidated or obsolete equipment which no longer meets the requirements of the new communication strategies. As a result, they are inundated by the publications and programmes of the major international media, thereby compounding the acculturation effect in our countries. In order to safeguard the social and cultural identities and specific characteristics of our peoples, our media facilities, including transmitters, printing equipment and production equipment, must be renovated. The aid or assistance of international institutions in the acquisition and renovation of such equipment, or the introduction of new local communication infrastructures, such as rural and local radio stations, and means of disseminating information (multimedia buses) in rural areas is vital in order to provide the rural population with the tools for acquiring essential know-how for the development of their environment.

8. Similarly, the developing countries have a pressing duty to acquire new communication technologies, and they cannot do so without donor assistance; it is incumbent on the United Nations to convince donors to contribute.

III. Human resources training

9. The freedom that goes along with emerging democracy must be coupled with a sense of responsibility on the part of communicators, which can only be acquired through human resources training. Training in the communication professions and in the use of new technologies (digital technology, for example), including scholarships, study trips, retraining seminars, apprenticeships and exchanges of professionals, will help communicators from developing countries to strengthen or improve their abilities and skills.

10. This could be done either locally in developing countries, or in countries with a long, established democratic tradition. The beneficiaries would be journalists, engineers and other technical experts in the communication field, in both the public and private sectors, with the aim of promoting more effective circulation of information for development.

11. These are the major strategies to be employed in assisting the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries in order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, the century of the new Internet and digital technologies. The role of the United Nations should therefore be not only to encourage the developed countries to help the developing countries through bilateral mechanisms but also to set up, through its various institutions, a fund to assist the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries.

IV. Replies received from specialized agencies

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. Together with the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, UNESCO has co-organized a series of regional seminars to promote independent and pluralistic media in Africa (Windhoek, 1991), Asia (Almaty, 1992), Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago de Chile, 1994) and the Arab States (Sana'a, 1996). The fifth in this series is being organized in 1997 at Sofia for Central and Eastern Europe. These seminars have each led to a declaration and a platform of action that have been endorsed by the General Conference of UNESCO, most recently at its twenty-eighth session (resolution 28 C/4.6), in October-November 1995.

2. Also instrumental in the work of building communications infrastructures are the round tables on communication for development organized regularly by the specialized agencies of the United Nations and non-governmental partners. The most recent was held at Harare in September 1996 and, in accordance with the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, its report was presented to the Secretary-General for submission to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. On 16 December 1996, the Assembly adopted resolution 51/172, in which it

considered that informal round tables, such as the sixth Inter-agency Round Table on Communication for Development, organized at Harare, could constitute a notable mechanism of inter-agency cooperation and coordination for promoting and advancing communication for development, and acknowledged the interest in holding the next informal round table in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The delegation of Brazil indicated that its authorities would be willing to host the round table. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has volunteered to organize it. UNESCO is ready to cooperate closely with UNICEF in the organization of the round table and, in the spirit of resolution 51/172, to work for the participation of key development partners in discussion, planning and financing of the meeting.

World Bank

1. An international conference hosted by the World Bank and the Government of Canada, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Governments of Switzerland and the United States of America and other public and private partners, will take place from 22 to 25 June 1997 at Toronto, Canada.

2. The participants at "Global Knowledge '97" will explore the vital role of knowledge in economic growth and social development, and advance the Global Knowledge Partnership, a public-private collaboration initiated by the World Bank to ensure that the world's poor share fully in the benefits of the information revolution.

3. The Conference will bring together 1,200 ministers and senior policy makers from countries undergoing economic and political transitions, representatives of the international development community, private industry, non-governmental organizations, training and academic institutions, scientists, teachers and opinion leaders, who can contribute experience, skills and insights to building and applying knowledge for sustainable development.

4. "Global Knowledge '97" will present a rich mix of interactive learning opportunities, ranging from keynote addresses by world leaders to interactive panels, seminars, workshops, consultations, film and video screenings and discussions. A conference Website will allow participants to connect easily to others with similar needs and interests, before, during and after the Conference.

5. At the Conference exhibition, participants will meet with leaders from business, academic and training institutions and non-governmental organizations. They will see demonstrations of products and services for building and mobilizing knowledge and information. An international business centre will provide translation, communications and private meeting services to facilitate dialogue.

6. The Conference will be built around four related themes:

(a) The global knowledge revolution: the nature of the emerging knowledge economy and its implications for developing countries, in particular the poorest; the power of new learning technologies; and the increasing importance of knowledge, information and skills to sustainable development;

(b) Policies: the policy frameworks that encourage the growth of the knowledge economy, effectively harness knowledge and skills for development and foster private sector investment in knowledge capital;

(c) Practices: global best practices and the lessons of experience from the public and private sectors in harnessing knowledge and designing effective learning programmes, with particular focus on programmes that empower the poor with knowledge and information and that build civic dialogue and social cohesion;

(d) Infrastructure: how to finance, build and sustain national information and communications infrastructures linked to the global information infrastructure; how to increase innovation and information flow in both the private and public sectors; and how to build sustainable rural communication systems.

7. "Global Knowledge '97" will provide a forum in which participants can learn how nations and organizations can better harness knowledge on behalf of sustainable development. This enhanced knowledge is expected:

(a) To accelerate policy reforms in telecommunications and informatics;

(b) To increase investment in telecommunications and information infrastructure;

(c) To expand use of information technology to build the knowledge resources of the poor and enable them to participate more effectively in development;

(d) To strengthen public dialogue on development, contributing to enhanced social cohesion;

(e) To build support within the donor community for country knowledge strategies;

(f) To contribute to more and better public-private partnerships.

8. "Global Knowledge '97" planners invite all interested parties to get in touch with them about designing and delivering seminars, symposia, demonstrations, case-studies, simulations, multimedia presentations and other forms of interactive learning and discussion that will contribute to the objectives of the conference.

9. Conference plenaries will be conducted in English, French and Spanish. Interpretors will be available for workshop sessions.

10. Conference registration is by invitation and application. Funding for travel and subsistence will be available for participants from developing countries invited by conference partners. Additional participants will be selected from applications received by the "Global Knowledge '97" conference organizers.

11. Between 200 and 300 government ministers or policy-level individuals (i.e. minister or permanent secretary, from ministries of finance, planning, rural development, industry, technology and education) will be invited, in addition to some 400 knowledge builders, teachers and trainers from learning institutions, including professionals from institutions of higher learning, especially institutions dealing with institutional development and building learning communities, management and technology, science policy technology, research and development.

12. Also, between 200 and 300 business and industry leaders committed to building learning organizations, experienced in fostering innovation and institutional change, successful in using new information technologies and management practices to improve productivity, quality and production, or who have responded successfully to the business opportunities created by the new information and communications technologies will be invited.

13. Some 200 to 300 leaders and staff from national, regional, multilateral and non-governmental organizations involved in financing and implementing development programmes, including individuals focused on policy issues related to information, communication, technology, institution- and capacity-building, knowledge-building and education, rural communications and rural development (including agriculture, infrastructure and enterprise) and individuals involved in social welfare, productive and social mobilization activities at the grass roots, especially if they have shown an interest in using the new technologies in their activities, will also participate.

14. The distribution of participants by region should be as follows:

Latin America	180
Africa	180
Middle East and North Africa	120
Europe and Central Asia	180
East Asia and the Pacific	240
South Asia	120
Industrialized democracies	180

15. The selection criteria will be based on:

(a) Rank and/or ability to affect policy or have an organizational impact beyond his/her own organization;

(b) Professional expertise/track record (i.e. having a background that would contribute relevant expertise to the conference as a whole);

(c) Institutional involvement (i.e. association with an institution or organization involved in implementing or supporting activities relevant to building and using knowledge or using technology to diffuse knowledge);

(d) Contribution the participant would make to the variety of organizations, backgrounds and experience of the conference as a whole;

(e) Contribution the participant would make to assuring participation of a critical mass of individuals from specific countries. These people should come from diverse backgrounds and institutions, but should have the potential to become the core of a national or regional network of individuals interested in the issues of the conference;

(f) Sponsorship (i.e. nomination by an organization related to the topics under discussion, including: (i) World Bank resident representatives; (ii) UNDP resident representatives; (iii) bilateral and multilateral donor and sponsoring organizations; (iv) private not-for-profit organizations with a track record in knowledge-building, using information technology in the development process and capacity-building; (v) known learning organizations; (vi) groups with expertise on how people learn; (vii) institutions of higher learning, especially those with developing country counterparts; (viii) international business organizations, associations and chambers of commerce.

16. The financing of the participation will be arranged as follows:

(a) Self-financed: all ministers, senior-level officials, private industry and donor representatives;

(b) Direct financing by donors: participants other than the above from developing country Governments, local

governments, non-governmental organizations and non-profit institutions;

(c) Financing from the participant trust fund: participants from Governments of developing countries eligible for international development assistance below the senior level, local Governments, non-governmental organizations and non-profit institutions.

17. "Global Knowledge '97" will address a fundamental challenge facing developing countries and the international development community in the information age: given the vital role of knowledge in economic and social development, how can developing countries, and in particular the world's poor, harness knowledge for development, participate in the global information economy and gain access to new tools for life-long learning?

18. The conference will address this challenge across five dimensions, constituting the five themes of the Conference:

(a) Understanding the global knowledge revolution: the increasing importance of knowledge and information for sustainable development; the power of new learning methods and technologies; and the nature of the emerging global information economy and its implications for developing countries and the world's poor;

(b) Building a supportive policy environment: the policy and regulatory frameworks that encourage the growth of the information economy, build knowledge capital and foster private sector investment in information infrastructure;

(c) Putting knowledge to use: global best practices and the lessons of experience from the private and public sectors in using knowledge and information as competitive tools and in designing effective learning programmes;

(d) Building the knowledge economy's infrastructure: how to finance, build and sustain national information and communications infrastructures; and how to build capacity and mobilize appropriate technology for universal access to information and life-long learning;

(e) Forging new partnerships: building innovative public/private partnerships to support learning for development and to build knowledge infrastructure of developing countries.

19. The conference programme will include plenary sessions that set the framework and lay out the main challenges; symposia on critical issues (policy, infrastructure, economics of information, equity, role of science and technology, national knowledge assessments); and smaller sessions, ranging from discussion panels and working groups to case presentations, on-site consultancies, best practice seminars and demonstrations of new learning technologies and approaches.

20. This mix of learning events, spanning three days, will be supplemented by a knowledge and technology forum (a hands-on exhibition space), an on-site computer network, a knowledge for development video festival and an intensive network of Internet activities before, during and after the conference.